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Amendments to the Claims

1. (previously amended) A method comprising:  
receiving, at a BIOS in a system, a message from an authorized party, wherein the authorized party is selected from a group of authorized parties consisting of a manufacturer, an original equipment manufacturer, and a lessor;  
authenticating that the message has been sent by the authorized party using a digital signature in the message and a public key stored in non-volatile storage communicatively coupled to the BIOS;  
verifying that the system is an intended recipient of the message, wherein verifying comprises comparing an identifier in the message against a globally unique identifier (GUID) of the system, the GUID stored in the non-volatile storage communicatively coupled to the BIOS;  
and  
when the message has been successfully authenticated and verified,  
controlling a state of an optional feature of a system resource in the system, using the BIOS, according to the message, wherein the message comprises information to determine the optional feature, and wherein the message further comprises a digital signature used for authenticating, and  
when the message fails the authenticating or the verifying, then discarding the message.
2. (canceled)
3. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising writing the message into a secure non-volatile location.
4. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the secure non-volatile location comprises a remote storage.

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5. (previously amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising splicing the content of the message into an execution path of the BIOS, wherein the splicing comprises at least one of modifying the BIOS or erasing a portion of the BIOS, in response to the message.

6. (previously amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising loading and executing content of the message using the BIOS at run-time, wherein the message is received via a network transmission.

7. (previously amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising updating a feature set of the system BIOS according to the message, wherein the feature set comprises a status of features of the system.

8. (previously amended) A system comprising:  
a system resource having controllable optional features;  
a non-volatile memory that stores a BIOS, the BIOS being adapted to receive a secure message from an authorized party for controlling at least one of the optional features, wherein the secure message comprises information to determine the at least one of the optional features, wherein the authorized party is selected from a group of authorized parties consisting of a manufacturer, an original equipment manufacturer, and a lessor, and wherein the system is to boot without enabling the at least one optional feature when the secure message is not received from the authorized party; and  
verification component to compare an identifier in the message against a globally unique identifier (GUID) of the system to verify an intended recipient of the message.

9. (previously amended) The system of claim 8 further comprising a write-once non-volatile unit for storing a public key accessible by the BIOS.

10. (previously amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the BIOS includes authentication circuitry for authenticating the secure message with a public key.

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11. (previously amended) The system of claim 8 further comprising a write-once non-volatile unit for storing the GUID accessible by the BIOS.

12. (canceled)

13. (previously amended) The system of claim 8 further comprising a secure non-volatile location for storing at least one of the optional features to be enabled, the location being readable and writable by the BIOS.

14. (previously amended) The system of claim 13 wherein the location comprises a remote storage.

15. (previously amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the BIOS also includes a feature set that is updated according to content of the secure non-volatile storage, wherein the feature set comprises a status of features of the system.

16. (previously amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the BIOS loads and executes the content of the message at run-time, wherein the message is received via a network transmission.

17. (previously amended) A computer program product residing on a computer readable medium comprising instructions for causing a computer to:

receive, at a BIOS in a system, a message from an authorized party, wherein the authorized party is selected from a group of authorized parties consisting of a manufacturer, an original equipment manufacturer, and a lessor;

authenticate that the message has been sent by the authorized party using a digital signature in the message and a public key stored in a non-volatile storage communicatively coupled to the BIOS;

verify that the system is an intended recipient of the message, wherein verifying comprises comparing an identifier in the message against a globally unique identifier (GUID) of

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the system, the GUID stored in the non-volatile storage communicatively coupled to the BIOS;  
and

when the message has been successfully authenticated and verified, control a state of a feature of a system resource, using the BIOS, according to the message, wherein the message comprises information to determine the optional feature of the system, and

when the message fails the authentication or the verifying, then discard the message.

18. (canceled)

19. (previously amended) The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions for causing a computer to write the message into a secure non-volatile location.

20. (previously amended) The computer program product of claim 19 wherein the secure non-volatile location comprises a remote storage.

21. (previously amended) The computer program product of claim 17 further comprising instructions for causing a computer to splice the content of the message into an execution path of the BIOS.

22. (previously amended) The computer program product of claim 17 further comprising instructions for causing a computer to load and execute the content of the message at the BIOS at run-time, wherein the message is received via a network transmission.

23. (previously amended) The computer program product of claim 17 further comprising instructions for causing a computer to update a feature set of the system BIOS according to the message, wherein the feature set comprises a status of features of the system.

24. (previously amended) A method comprising:  
when a message from an authorized party is received at a BIOS of a system:

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verifying an identifier in the message against a globally unique identifier (GUID) of the system,

authenticating that the message has been sent by an authorized party public/private key pair, the public key stored in non-volatile storage communicatively coupled to a BIOS of the system, and

controlling a state of an optional feature of a system resource, using the BIOS upon booting the system, according to the message, wherein the message comprises information to determine the optional feature, and wherein the message further comprises a digital signature; and

when a message from an authorized party is not received at a BIOS:

booting the system without enabling optional features of the system.

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, further comprising splicing the content of the message into an execution path of the BIOS, wherein the splicing comprises at least one of modifying the BIOS or erasing a portion of the BIOS, in response to the message.

26. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, further comprising loading and executing content of the message using the BIOS at run-time, wherein the message is received via a network transmission.

27. (previously amended) A system comprising:

a system resource having controllable optional features, wherein the system resource is selected from the group of system resources consisting of storage capacity, processor redundancy, processor speed, memory, input/output devices, processors, redundant power supplies, Peripheral Component Interconnect (PCI) bus, and other elements of the system contributable to processing power;

a non-volatile memory that stores a BIOS, the BIOS to receive a secure message from an authorized party for controlling at least one of the optional features, wherein the secure message comprises information to determine the at least one of the optional features, information to

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authenticate the authorized party, and information to verify the system is authorized to enable at least one optional feature of the system resource; and

an authenticator to decrypt, authenticate and verify the secure message, the verification using a globally unique identifier (GUID) to uniquely identify the system and to discard the secure message if failure occurs during any one of decryption, authentication and verification.

28. (previously presented) The system of claim 27, wherein the secure message is to be received by the BIOS during run-time of the system.

29. (previously presented) The system of claim 28, wherein the system is to be rebooted to enable the BIOS to control the at least one of the optional features according to the received secure message.

30. (previously presented) The system of claim 27, wherein the BIOS is to load and execute the content of the message at run-time, wherein the message is received via one of a network transmission and electronic mail.

31. (previously presented) The system of claim 27, wherein the secure message comprises executable code to be used as a Dynamically Loaded Library (DLL), and wherein the DLL is to be stored in non-volatile storage coupled to the BIOS, and wherein the DLL is to be loaded by the BIOS at run-time.

32. (previously amended) The system as recited in claim 8, wherein the system comprises a platform to authenticate the secure message by the BIOS without requiring a processor or hardware in addition to hardware used in the system to execute the BIOS, in order to perform the authentication.